



State of Florida  
**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS**

**Office of the Executive Director**

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Executive Director

**Ron DeSantis**  
Governor  
**Ashley Moody**  
Attorney General  
**Jimmy Patronis**  
Chief Financial Officer  
**Nikki Fried**  
Commissioner of Agriculture

DATE: February 1, 2019

TO: The Honorable Ron DeSantis  
The Honorable Ashley Moody  
The Honorable Jimmy Patronis  
The Honorable Nikki Fried

FROM: Daniel W. "Danny" Burgess Jr.  
Executive Director

SUBJECT: Quarterly Report – Second Quarter, Fiscal Year 2018 - 2019

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The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs submits the Quarterly Report for the Second Quarter of the 2018-2019 Fiscal Year, covering the period October 1 – December 31, 2018.

The Quarterly Report is submitted pursuant to the procedures authorized by Rule 55-1.003 Florida Administrative Code (06/10/2008). The report will be placed on the agenda at a future meeting of the Governor and Cabinet.

If you have any questions regarding any matter covered by this report, please contact Deputy Executive Director Al Carter at (727) 518-3202 or Legislative and Cabinet Affairs Director Roy Clark at (850) 487-1533.

CC: Senator Aaron Bean, Chair, Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services  
Senator Tom A. Wright, Chair, Military and Veterans Affairs and Space Committee  
Speaker Pro Tempore MaryLynn Magar, Chair, Health Care Appropriations Subcommittee  
Representative Bobby Payne, Chair, Local, Federal & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee  
Cynthia Kelly, Director, Governor's Office of Policy and Budget

Attachment 1: FDVA Quarterly Report

## ATTACHMENT 1

### FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS SECOND QUARTER REPORT Oct 1 – Dec 31, 2018

This report covers the activities of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA) for the Second Quarter of the 2018-2019 Fiscal Year.

#### 1) Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs Administrative Highlights

##### a) Current Issues/Concerns

###### i. Executive Direction:

Executive Director Glenn Sutphin visited the 120-bed Clifford C. Sims State Veterans' Nursing Home in Panama City following the impact of Hurricane Michael. During his visit, he expressed to both residents and staff the agency's full support for continued operations and full recovery. He also praised the resilience of all involved and expressed his gratitude to State Veterans' Homes Program Director Connie Tolley and her dedicated team for their tireless effort.

Hurricane Michael made landfall on the Florida Panhandle on Oct. 10. Panama City was one of the most affected area with catastrophic damage due to extreme winds gust of 129 mph and storm surge up to 14 feet. The Veterans' Home's residents, staff and their families were safely sheltered in place. The facility was equipped with emergency power and sufficient staff during the catastrophic storm. Division of State Veterans' Homes Program Director Connie Tolley and her team including health care professionals arrived soon after the storm to augment the Sims' staff. During the critical hours, prompt actions were taken to ensure the safety of the residents to maintain a steady power supply, health care and food service, and an overall safe facility.

Following Hurricane Michael, FDVA Communications saturated the radio airwaves in Panama City with a 15-second spot for a 30-day period, beginning Nov. 1. Our health care professional recruitment spot ran on the following radio iHeart Radio stations in Bay County: WPAP-FM, WFSY-FM, WFLF-FM, WEBZ-FM, and WDIZ-AM/FM. The stations are a mix of Country, Adult Contemporary, News Talk Information, Urban Adult Contemporary and Active Rock. The month-long hiring initiative was very successful, with only five vacancies reported as being open at the end of the campaign from a high of 30.

During the second quarter, Executive Director Glenn Sutphin also represented FDVA at the following outreach events:

- The "Gala Honoring Our Veterans" event at *The Atrium* in Gainesville, Nov. 8.
- The Florida Veterans Council via conference call, Nov. 15.
- The Florida Veterans Foundation on their 10th Anniversary celebration, Nov. 15.

Executive Director Glenn Sutphin received the Governor's Medal of Merit during the Dec. 4 Cabinet meeting at the Capitol. During his 30 years (1969-1999) of military service, Lt. Col. Glenn Sutphin was awarded the Legion of Merit, three Meritorious Service medals, three Army Commendation medals, an Army Achievement medal, four Humanitarian Service medals and several National Guard medals. Furthermore, the Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame Class of 2018 was inducted at the final Cabinet meeting of the Scott Administration.

To enhance veteran suicide prevention efforts, the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs announced on Dec. 12 that the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay has received a five-year contract from the VA to enhance services provided to Florida veterans through the Florida Veterans Support Line (1-844-MyFLVet).

Gov. Rick Scott signed the following proclamations to commemorate veterans for their selfless dedication to the nation.

- The annual Veterans Day Resolution on the 100th Anniversary of World War I Armistice, Nov. 11.
- The annual Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day Proclamation on Dec. 7.
- The annual Battle of the Bulge Day in Florida Proclamation on Dec. 16.

The Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs collaborated with the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) for Paychecks for Patriots events, which hold job fairs for veterans and their families.

In conjunction with our Human Resources Office and Veterans' Homes Program, FDVA Communications created a 30-second public service announcement to assist our recruiting of health care professionals in October-December 2018. We targeted cinema complexes in communities surrounding our seven State Veterans' Homes. We aired the public service announcement prior to the start of each movie on cinema screens in nine theater complexes from Panama City to Pembroke Pines. Similar initiatives over the past two fiscal years were successful.

**Deputy Executive Director Al Carter and key agency staff presented and/or attended the following events:**

FDVA Communications Director Steve Murray provided a veterans' outreach update to County Veteran Service Officers and FDVA Field Services staff during the CVSO Fall training conference in Safety Harbor, Oct. 8.

FDVA Communications Director Steve Murray toured the hurricane-impacted Marianna VA Outpatient Clinic with VA Undersecretary for Operations Steve Young, Oct. 23. Later that afternoon, he addressed the Florida Public Relations Association senior leadership on military and veteran public affairs activities at Naval Air Station Pensacola.

FDVA Deputy Executive Director Al Carter met with the Department of Management Services and OHL Arellano Construction Company in coordination for the Ardie R. Copas State Veterans' Nursing Home construction progress, Oct. 25.

FDVA Communications Director Steve Murray provided opening remarks at the "Remember Our Fallen" Tribute Wall Dedication ceremony honoring Gold Star Families in Crystal River, Oct. 26.

FDVA Deputy Executive Director Al Carter supported the 54th Annual Veterans Day tribute in Tampa, Nov. 12.

FDVA Communications Director Steve Murray served as the keynote speaker at the Florida Blue Veteran's Day program in Jacksonville, Nov. 12.

FDVA Communications Director Steve Murray represented FDVA at the Florida Health Care Association's Public Affairs committee meeting in Tampa, Nov. 13. FDVA is a member of the advocacy association representing more than 80% of all skilled nursing facilities in Florida.

FDVA Deputy Executive Director Al Carter spoke on Florida veterans' resources and provided an educational briefing to the St. Lucie Human Resource Association at the Annual Veterans Meeting, Nov. 29.

## ii. Division of Veterans' Benefits and Assistance:

### (1) Bureau of Veterans' Claims Services:

The Bureau of Claims Services continued to see an increase in operations. We participated in additional informal Decision Review Officer teleconferences, under the new Rapid Appeal Modernization Program (RAMP).

The Bureau of Claims Services advocated for 17,642 veterans and their families, with 6,977 rating decision reviews of claims for disability benefits through the Veterans Benefits Management System (VBMS), a VA computer management system for claims processing. Additionally, 450 veterans were represented before the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA) to uphold their appellate rights for veterans' benefits. In addition, more than 202 personal hearings were scheduled with the St. Petersburg VA Regional Office. Our intercession on the veterans' behalf resulted in the mitigation of most issues prior to the hearing date, often saving claimants months or years of waiting for a decision.

The receipt of VA centralized printing of all correspondence, and the VA Rapid Appeals Modernization Program, continue to tax our operations. We experienced an increase in those electing to select the new program, the Appeals Modernization Program, which affords a quicker review of appeals. As always, Claims Services continues to stand ready to meet the increasing demands of veterans' appeals requirements.

Fiscal Year 2018-2019				
Event	First Quarter	Second Quarter	Year To Date FY 2018-19	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. Actual FY 2017-18
Retroactive Compensation	\$22,824,266	\$25,814,523	\$48,638,789	\$63,505,386
Largest Single Retro. Benefit	\$297,550	\$278,576	\$297,550	\$227,412
Debt Relief	\$306,197	\$192,220	\$498,417	\$589,113
Notices of Disagreement	999	690	1,689	1,558
Statements of Argument in Appeals Cases*	170	54	224	710
Act as Representative at Hearings*	218	202	420	302
Veterans' Appeals Hearings*	305	450	755	566
Ratings Reviewed	9,057	6,977	16,034	19,130
(1) The appeals representation process includes formal filing of the appeal application, and paralegal representation with the veteran at the Regional Office and in teleconferences with the Board of Veterans' Appeals.				
(2) The "Largest Single Retro. Benefits" Year to Date for FY 2018-19 and the Actual for FY 2017-19 reflects only the largest benefit amount that was received as of second quarter of the fiscal year.				

### (2) Bureau of Veterans' Field Services:

The Bureau of Field Services advocated for 63,557 veterans and their families, while conducting 266 outreach events, providing earned benefit information to 7,791 veterans and their families. Field Services also completed 11,735 disability claims. In addition, Field Services attended nine Homeless Stand Down events, 29 Transition Assistance Briefings in order to file disability claims during those presentations and 43 New Patient Orientations in VA Medical Centers and VA Outpatient Clinics.

Field Services' supervisors assisted the Bureau of Veterans' Claims by reviewing and entering 849 rating decisions capturing \$8,773,279 in revenue. More than 2,769 veterans were queried for registering to vote. Further, walk-in counseling was accomplished with more than 32,622 veterans and family members.

Fiscal Year 2018-2019				
Event	First Quarter	Second Quarter	Year To Date FY 2018-19	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. Actual FY 2017-18
Number of Issue Resolutions	8,476	7,517	15,993	15,550
Total Amount of Issues Resolution	\$23,969,566	\$20,695,225	\$44,664,791	\$34,673,434
Outreach Visits	221	266	487	402
Veterans Served at Outreach	7,791	11,735	19,526	16,662
Bedside Interviews	308	293	601	2,009
Walk-ins / Counseling	33,247	32,622	65,869	61,792
Claims	10,262	9,516	19,778	18,117
Voter Registration Pref. Forms	3,623	2,769	6,392	5,040
Homeless Walk In	96	112	208	277
Ratings Reviewed Orlando / West Palm	597	841	1,438	1.906

Fiscal Year 2018-2019				
Event	First Quarter	Second Quarter	Year To Date FY 2018-19	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. Actual FY 2017-18
Reintegration and Pre-Deployment Events for Guard and Reserve Units	4	4	8	6
Homeless Veteran Stand Down Events	8	9	17	16
Medical Center Welcome Home events	0	0	0	1
Congressional Open House events	1	0	1	6
National Conferences	0	0	0	0
New Patient Orientation	49	43	92	40
Transition Assistance Briefings	36	29	65	25
Other	151	180	331	307

(1) Supervisors and VCEs throughout the Division of Veterans' Benefits and Assistance provide presentation, orientations and briefings on state, federal and local veterans' laws and benefits.

Summary of veterans' benefits derived vs. cost of the benefits staff: \$78:\$1 (ROI).

### (3) The Bureau of State Approving Agency (SAA) for Veterans' Education and Training:

With demonstrations of great teamwork and focus, the SAA is emerging from an extremely taxing quarter. In addition to the extensive and anticipated end of federal fiscal year reports

due to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), verifying completion of contract requirements and the acceptance of a renewed contract, the SAA faced a deluge of unanticipated events. With Hurricane Michael making landfall on Oct. 10, the SAA worked with scores of Panhandle schools as they recovered from the massive storm. Fifteen schools experienced closures and changes to their programs and term dates, affecting more than 600 veteran students.

Furthermore, immediate and unanticipated actions had to be taken with two national chains of schools. One chain abruptly closed, shutting down four schools in Florida and the other, with nine facilities in the state, is currently under review. Two smaller schools were withdrawn by the SAA due to egregious activities, resulting in collaborative efforts between the SAA and VA's Office of Inspector General. Also, even though Florida has been given 23 fewer compliance surveys to perform this year, additional compliance survey oversight duties have been added. The Florida SAA received and/or were requested to assist VA, with special compliance reviews, for another five schools during second quarter. Compounding the volume of work created by these unusual events, the SAA database crashed during this quarter and resolution has yet to be received. With our primary duty being oversight of the quality and integrity of education programs being offered to veteran students, we brace for what promises to be a raucous year.

Fiscal Year 2018-2019				
Event	First Quarter	Second Quarter	Year To Date FY 2018-19	2 <sup>nd</sup> Qtr. Actual FY 2017-18
SAA Programs Approved	5,920	3,847	9,767	11,258
Other Approval	676	399	1,075	1,194
Compliance Visits	24	4	28	52
Inspection Visits	18	7	25	27
Outreach Activities <sup>(1)</sup>	257	178	435	488
Liaison Activities <sup>(2)</sup>	240	231	471	459
Technical Assistance <sup>(3)</sup>	1,041	779	1,820	2,206
<p>(1) Outreach Activities are any activity designed to inform or encourage those with entitlement to use it. SAA contact with non-approved schools and training facilities, inviting them to apply for approval to participate in GI Bill® programs, also are considered outreach.</p> <p>(2) Liaison activities are those that foster education about the SAA with other education and training professionals, which promote and encourage the exchange of information and support to raise awareness of the professional nature of the SAA approval function.</p> <p>(3) Technical assistance is any interaction designed to assist an individual or a facility with any aspect of the approval function.</p>				

### iii. Division of State Veterans' Homes:

Hurricane Michael, the third-most intense Atlantic hurricane to make landfall in the contiguous United States, scored a direct hit on the Clifford C. Sims State Veterans' Nursing Home in Panama City on Wednesday, Oct. 10, 2018 at 2:00 p.m.

The home's residents, staff members and families had sheltered in place at the 120-bed state veterans' home and were all safe. The home's permanent emergency generator kept the home functioning during the critical hours of the hurricane.



The powerful storm toppled trees, light posts, tore down electrical lines and removed most of the brick nursing home's shingles from the roof. The home, built in 2003, was hurricane strong and withstood the winds but received roof damage with major water damage to the interior of the 60-bed Delta Wing.

Seven members of FDVA's Veterans' Homes Division (Connie Tolley, Director Homes Division, Natacha Delince, Program Administrator, Richardean Bruce, Clinical Program Director, Tami Ryder, Grant Specialist, Laura Slezak, Recreational Therapist, Katheryn Horn, MDS Regional Nurse Consultant and Gwen Hamilton, Registered Nurse Consultant)



arrived at the impacted area in less than 24 hours to augment staff and begin recovery efforts.

Immediately upon arrival, the seven arranged for the installation of drying tarps to the damaged roof, helped water damage restoration for the Delta Wing, and arranged for fallen trees to be removed from the grounds. In addition, in conjunction with FDVA's Emergency Coordinating Officer, two portable generators were brought to the facility to ensure continued water and sewage service. Additional food, water, linen and medical supplies were expedited to the home by administrators, health care and maintenance staff from three other State Veterans' Nursing Homes (Emory L. Bennett, Baldomero Lopez, and Douglas T. Jacobson). Water and sewage service was fully functioning again within 36 hours of main utility failure.

The State Veterans' Homes Program played a vital role in the prevention of the evacuation of the Panama City facility in response to the disastrous circumstances involving Hurricane Michael. The team's unwavering dedication to the veteran residents, families and staff played a vital role in their safety, security and the well-being of all involved. Led by Division Director Connie Tolley, the individuals on the team spared no time in responding to the dire needs of the facility and all proved their ability to broaden their capabilities in the face of hardship. The level of continuous care for our veterans at the veterans' home was seamless.

The Clifford C. Sims State Veterans' Nursing Home just completed their annual Agency for Health Care Administration survey with no deficiencies. Hurricane repairs to the home continue and the State of Emergency remains in place for Bay County until Feb. 3, 2019. The high quality of care remains untouched at this State Veterans' Nursing Home.

## **2) Required Items per Florida Administrative Code/F.A.C. 55-1.003(s):**

### **a) Contracts (F.A.C. 55-1.003(e))**

- i. FDVA "Physical, Occupational, and Speech Therapy Services" solicitation (Invitation to Negotiate - ITN) issued 12/21/2018. Estimated annual contract amount: \$4,500,000.
- ii. FDVA "Food/Subsistence" procurement source, via prior USDVA short-term contract with US Foods (for FY's 2017-2018), expired 10/31/2018 and closed out 11/1/2018. Annual contract amount: \$2,900,000.
- iii. FDVA "Food/Subsistence" procurement source, via new USDVA contract with US Foods (for FY's 2018-2023), commenced 11/1/2018. Annual contract amount: \$2,900,000.
- iv. FDVA "Direct Support Organization" contract, with the Florida Veterans Foundation, annual performance certification (for FY 2017-2018) issued 11/5/2018. No cost contract.
- v. FDVA "Ardie Copas SVNH New Construction" DMS contract Amendment No. 3 (construction), with OHL Arellano, executed 11/27/2018. Total project budget amount: \$58,446,960 (65% federally funded; 35% state funded).
- vi. FDVA "Lake Baldwin CLC Remodel/Retrofit" DMS contract (construction), with OHL Arellano, received 10/5/2018. Total project budget amount: \$8,677,000 (65% federally funded; 35% state funded).
- vii. Clifford C. Sims SVNH "Activities Porch Remodel" contract, with McInnis Builders, LLC, closed out 10/31/2018. Total contract amount: \$54,890.
- viii. Clifford C. Sims SVNH "Nursing Stations Cabinets Refinishing" contract, with Benchmark Commercial Services, LLC, closed out 11/5/2018. Total contract amount: \$40,000.
- ix. Douglas T. Jacobson SVNH "Barrier Walls and Fire Doors Replacement" contract, with Life Safety Services, LLC, closed out 10/5/2018. Total contract amount: \$50,400.
- x. Douglas T. Jacobson SVNH "Dining Room/Lanai Extension" solicitation (Invitation to Bid - ITB) issued 11/27/2018. Pre-bid meeting held 12/11/2018. Bid opening held 12/28/2018. Budget authority amount: \$195,000.
- xi. Emory L. Bennett SVNH "Drainage, Irrigation, and Landscaping" contract, with Conephal, Inc. D/B/A Big Value Garden Center, closed out 11/2/2018. Total contract amount: \$209,711.
- xii. Emory L. Bennett SVNH "Pavilion Refurbishing" solicitation (Invitation to Bid - ITB) issued 10/4/18. Pre-bid meeting 10/24/2018. Bid opening 11/7/2018. Contract awarded 11/26/2018 to KBT Contracting. Contract executed 12/5/2018 with KBT Contracting. Total contract amount: \$42,300.
- xiii. Emory L. Bennett SVNH "Surveillance System Replacement" contract Change Order No. 4 (extension), with JSC Systems, Inc., executed on 11/9/2018, closed out 12/20/2018. Total contract amount: \$79,010.



- xiv. Robert Jenkins SVDH “Primary Care Visits” contract Amendment No. 3 (annual renewal), with USDVA, executed 11/30/2018. Annual contract amount: \$30,800.

**b) Consultants (F.A.C. 55-1.003(h))**

- i. None

**c) Leases (F.A.C. 55-1.003(i))**

- i. FDVA made no additions, alterations or modifications to leased space during Second Quarter.

**d) Lawsuits/Claims in Litigation or Settled this Quarter (F.A.C. 55-1.003(k) and (l))**

- i. **0 General Liability Claims:** (1 new this Quarter), 2 pre-suit notices, 0 won, 0 settled, 0 lost, 1 pending.
- ii. **2 Employment Liability Claims:** (2 new this Quarter) 0 won, 0 settled, 0 lost, 4 pending.

**e) Contracts and agreements required to carry out programs approved by the Legislature or Governor and Cabinet**

- i. None

**f) Professional Services (F.A.C. 55-1.003(3)(k))**

- i. None

**g) Notifications to State Attorneys, Sheriffs or other Law Enforcement (F.A.C. 55-1.003(3)(m))**

- i. None.

## h) Donations (F.A.C. 55-1.003(n))

### i. Non-Cash Donations Received by State Veterans' Homes

Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Second Quarter		
	Items	Value
Robert H. Jenkins SVDH, Lake City	No Donations this Quarter	\$0
Emory L. Bennett SVNH, Daytona Beach	No Donations this Quarter	\$0
Baldomero Lopez SVNH, Land O' Lakes	(2) Walkers @ \$25 ea. DVD Player used Amputee Items	\$50 \$25 \$20
Alexander "Sandy" Nininger SVNH, Pembroke Pines	Merlin Viewer Reader HP Printer	\$250 \$100
Clifford C. Sims SVNH, Panama City	TV 40" Sanyo	\$198
Douglas T. Jacobson SVNH, Port Charlotte	Sound System Pyle 500 W wireless 17 HDI CD Boom boxes Samsung DVD Player	\$216 \$25 \$40
Clyde E. Lassen SVNH, St. Augustine	No Donations this Quarter	\$0
<b>Total Value</b>		<b>\$924</b>
(1) Rounded amount in to nearest tenths. (2) State Veterans' Nursing Home (SVNH) (3) State Veterans' Domiciliary Home (SVDH)		

### ii. Cash Donations Received by State Veterans' Homes

Fiscal Year 2018-2019			
Facilities	First Quarter	Second Quarter	Total
Robert H. Jenkins SVDH, Lake City	\$154	\$1,310	\$1,464
Emory L. Bennett SVNH, Daytona Beach	\$20,545	\$1,740	\$22,285
Baldomero Lopez SVNH, Land O' Lakes	\$50	\$625	\$675
Alexander "Sandy" Nininger SVNH, Pembroke Pines	\$770	\$50	\$820
Clifford C. Sims SVNH, Panama City	\$650	\$402	\$1,052
Douglas T. Jacobson SVNH, Port Charlotte	\$550	\$86	\$636
Clyde E. Lassen SVNH, St. Augustine	\$5,000	\$5	\$5,005
<b>All State Veterans' Homes</b>	<b>\$27,719</b>	<b>\$4,218</b>	<b>\$31,937</b>
(1) State Veterans' Nursing Home (SVNH) (2) State Veterans' Domiciliary Home (SVDH)			

### i. Memberships in Professional Organizations Paid (F.A.C. 55-1.003(p))

Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Second Quarter		
Facilities	FHCA	Total
Robert H. Jenkins SVDH, Lake City	\$1,652	\$1,652
Emory L. Bennett SVNH, Daytona Beach	\$4,316	\$4,316
Baldomero Lopez SVNH, Land O' Lakes	\$4,329	\$4,329
Alexander "Sandy" Nininger SVNH, Pembroke Pines	\$4,354	\$4,354
Clifford C. Sims SVNH, Panama City	\$4,316	\$4,316
Douglas T. Jacobson SVNH, Port Charlotte	\$4,341	\$4,341
Clyde E. Lassen SVNH, St. Augustine	\$4,341	\$4,341
<b>All State Veterans' Homes</b>	<b>\$27,648</b>	<b>\$27,648</b>
(1) State Veterans' Nursing Home (SVNH) (2) State Veterans' Domiciliary Home (SVDH) (3) Florida Health Care Association (FHCA)		



## 2) Veterans Florida (VF)

During the Second Quarter of Fiscal Year 2018-2019, *Veterans Florida* continued its work of implementing its statutory programs as well as continuing its efforts to assist veterans in finding and connecting with services and benefits.

### Internal Operations

Executive Director Bobby Carbonell resigned from *Veterans Florida* effective Sept. 25, 2018. The Board of Directors appointed Joe Marino as the new Executive Director at the Nov. 5, 2018 board meeting.

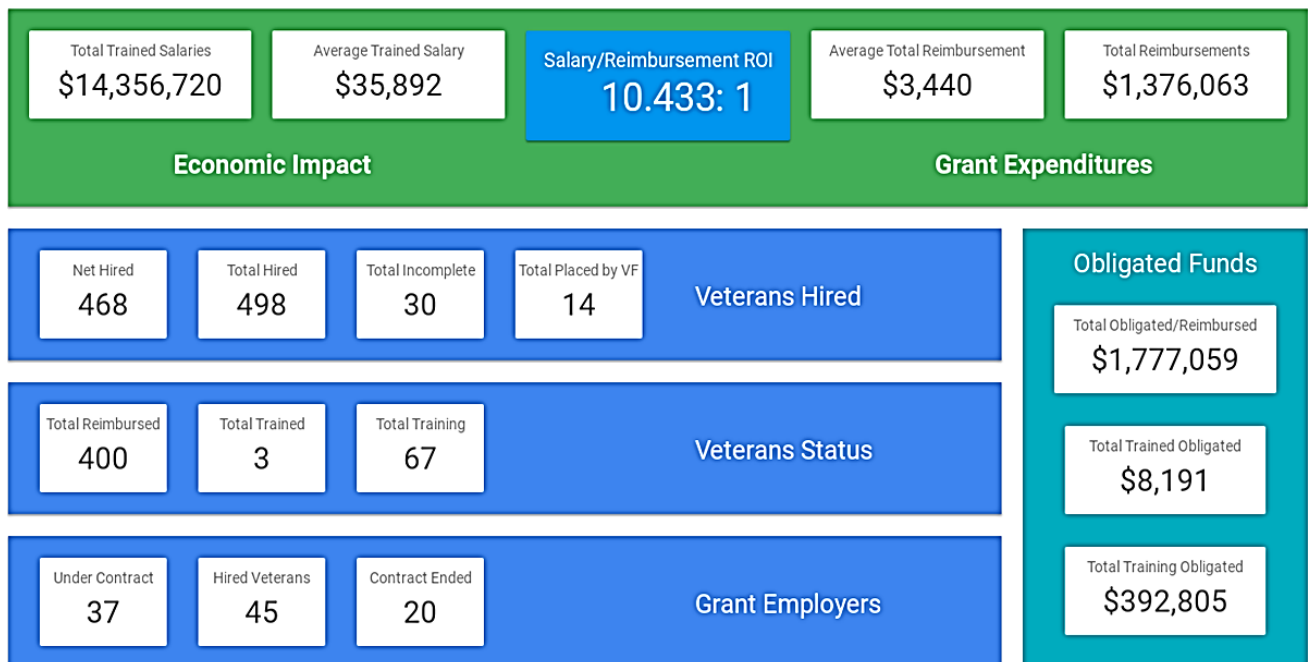
### Marketing

The Marketing and Communications team continues its work in the three primary areas of advertising focus and web development initiatives. The team has been automating workflow, updating user-facing forms, implementing Salesforce, and planning major website updates.

December campaign statistics:

- 89,000 unique website visitors
- 10,365 followers on Facebook
- 30,507 newsletter subscribers
- 2,920 post reach LinkedIn followers
- 9,065 post reach on Twitter

### Career Services Program



The Career Services Team is directly responsible for 14 placements with our existing employers, with total net hired throughout the program at 468 veterans. We are more than \$1.7 million total grant dollars obligated over the life of the program contributing to more than \$12 million in wages for veterans. The grant program ROI is more than 10:4.

### **Entrepreneurship Program**

Network Partners wrapped up their fall cohorts. Entrepreneurship Director Jeremy Sinnemaki and Program Coordinator Allison Rudd attended the going away and meet and greet for the change of directors at the University of West Florida. This month has focused on recruiting and marketing participants for the spring cohorts. Additionally, network partners continue to hold various workshops and networking events to help address specific challenges and create a pipeline of participants for the spring cohorts. Salesforce implementation continues and is expected to be complete by the end of January.

### **Veteran Agriculture Selection Program (VASP)**

Two VASP interns are currently working their internships, one position at Gulf Coast Research and Education Center (REC) and one position at North Florida REC. VASP Manager Amy Entress continues to work to increase the number of research farms willing to accept interns under the program and is petitioning for additional internship positions. She is also working with several companies to obtain corporate sponsorships for veteran interns to alleviate funding concerns from the RECs. We are interviewing and hope to fill the open position at Range Cattle REC in Ona, Florida that our career services department has referred. Positions at Gulf Coast REC and North Florida REC are recurring. Additional positions have been secured for the spring cohort at Range Cattle REC, Mid Florida REC and Tropical Aquaculture Lab. Recruitment continues for all open positions with a new webpage, video and social media campaign.

*Veterans Florida* has met and established relationships with several University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) Research and Education Centers (REC):

- Gulf Coast Research and Education Center, Wimauma
- Mid-Florida Research and Education Center, Apopka
- North Florida Research and Education Center, Quincy
- Range Cattle Research and Education Center, Ona
- Tropical Aquaculture Laboratory, Ruskin

### **Sponsorship Program and Fundraising**

The federal FY 2019 (Oct. 1, 2018 through Sept. 30, 2019) Enhancing Agricultural Opportunities for Military Veterans Request for Application (RFA) is open from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. *Veterans Florida* has completed writing the updated proposal and is preparing to submit their proposal for the VASP program prime award. Deadline for submittal is Jan. 10, 2019.

### **Board of Directors Meeting**

The next scheduled board meeting is Feb. 4, 2019 in Tallahassee.





### **3) Florida Veterans Foundation (FVF)**

In 2008, the Florida Legislature established the Florida Veterans Foundation (FVF) as a Direct Support Organization of the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA). The Foundation operates for the direct and indirect benefit of the veterans of Florida, the FDVA, state Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) and County Veteran Service Officers (CVSO). The FVF is also a nonprofit organization operating for charitable and educational purposes under Section 501(c) (3). The FVF seeks out the greatest unmet needs of Florida veterans and works proactively and collaboratively with State Veterans Service Organizations to solve issues that impede their progress, such as employment, housing, transportation and benefits assistance.

FVF currently works to create a prioritized list of initiatives to the legislative menu for the 2019 session and best practices for veteran programs.

The Second Quarter of Fiscal Year 2018-2019 continued with FVF transcending its mission to align support of the FDVA in a more collaborative manner to ensure greater global impact for veterans through development of best practices. The following five initiatives will affect veterans in a more global, positive and productive manner.

#### **a) Veterans' Financial Literacy**

FVF targeted veterans' outreach and education of earned benefits availability and registration to gain financial resources. The intent to register and account for veterans throughout the state was advocated through a grant provided by the Attorney General. This program will encourage and make possible the opportunity for veterans to remain for longer periods of time in their own homes for their health and welfare.

The benefit of Aid and Attendance, Pension and Disability claims allows veterans the benefit of Federal VA funding, thereby freeing up State Medicaid money. Another product for this initiative is that every 800 veterans that register with the VA earns the state five federally funded medical professionals. Moreover, Florida agencies for aging, health and education will be more able to account for and serve veterans who are now not identified within the system.

#### **b) Suicide Prevention, Opioid, Mental Health Services:**

FVF worked with the Tampa Bay area's 2-1-1 Crisis Center to provide support for a targeted statewide campaign that will connect the pilot veteran population to service providers at all levels and by issues such as Suicide Prevention, Opioid Abuse, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Mental Health Treatment.

The initiative utilizes a "Get Help Now" phone app that connects all veterans to immediate relief and follows up when they are in crisis. The intent is to find and provide solution to those who are angry, suicidal and/or need other services to include financial and transportation.

Florida's commitment and aggressive approach to opioid abuse and treatment leading veterans to productive lives would be the preeminent program in the nation. Through the Crisis Center

Pilot Program, more than 10,000 veterans and/or their families reached out for help - 30% of the callers are expressing suicidal thoughts or concerns 2,500 veterans still receiving ongoing care. FVF has worked with FDVA in gaining funding of \$2 million from the Florida Department of Children and Families to move forward on the initiative. The approach is very simple:

- i. Build personal relationships for agency/service partnerships to expand services and improve outcomes.
- ii. Provide full-on, targeted campaign to connect veterans to service providers.
- iii. Educate access to care by linking resources, support groups and partners outside system such as law enforcement and community advisory boards and families.
- iv. Expand services through unmet social service/community needs that create barriers to service delivery.
- v. Aggressively work with Attorney General (AG), Department of Children and Families (DCF), Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Elder Affairs (DOEA), Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) and others for Opioids Resources to execute program.

Expected outcomes of statewide network:

- Leave no Florida veteran behind
- Reduction in ER visits
- Decreased harm to self and others
- Referrals and linkages to VA
- Decreased recidivism rate
- Local community resources of crisis counseling
- Promote best practices and successful treatment
- Set model for national replication
- Advertise – “If they can’t find us, we can’t help”
- Transcend Veteran Pilot Program into Florida population to include schools and students
- Partner with new programs in opioid treatment e.g. “Clean Slate” program utilizing Buprenorphine
- Success Stories and Set Model Expectations for National Replication

#### **c) Aging Veterans Benefits Outreach:**

There are approximately 40,000 aging veterans in home receiving In-Home Healthcare services and 20,000 veterans residing in the 3,100 Assisted Living Facilities in Florida. This demographic desperately seeks the benefit of Aid and Attendance, Pension and Disability Claims. This effort is to honor those veterans in their time of need. FVF wrote to all Florida Legislators and community leadership seeking their support. This collective effort, teamed with the AHCA, DCF, DOH and DOEA, can potentially bring in more than \$3 billion in federal VA funding to Florida veterans. This will free up State Medicaid resources.

FVF has teamed with the Bay Area Legal Service, with the support of Florida veteran attorneys and trusted Elder Care Attorneys, to keep elder veterans in their homes. The program has employed two veterans paid for by the American Patriot Service Corp (APSC) to work full time with FVF to educate ALF's and aging veteran caregivers. The expectation is to have this model replicated statewide with set-in-stone, successful programs. A video has been produced by FVF

and distributed to all ALF's and Florida Veteran Service Organizations, State Agencies, Legislators, trained Volunteers and Elder Care Affiliates.

FVF has teamed with the National Association of Veterans and Families (NAVF) and American Patriot Service Corp (APSC) to begin execution of building regional sites to serve the aging population. With this collaborative effort, both entities have submitted 1,500 claims for approximately \$100 million in benefits in the past year.

**d) Veteran Treatment Court Statewide Leadership and Standards:**

Veterans Treatment Court (VTC) – create a Veterans Treatment Court statewide committee, Rehabilitation vs. Incarceration. More than 700,000 veterans nationwide are in some phase of the U.S. Criminal Court process. One out of six veterans have a substance abuse problem. Moreover, one out of five veterans have been diagnosed with some type of mental illness or cognitive impairment. This includes Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) from roadside bombs and suicide bombers (IEDs). In many cases, upon returning stateside, these veterans subsequently commit a criminal offense, which can be directly attribute to a service or combat related injury. More often, those diagnoses were not properly identified in returning veterans and they become lost in the criminal justice system without the necessary medical help. This encourages a vicious cycle of hopelessness, non-recovery, and ultimately, serious injury or even death in combat veterans.

The Veterans Treatment Court is a hybrid court, blending aspects of the traditional Drug, Criminal, Mental Health and Diversionary Court processes. Its primary focus is on the effective identification, treatment and successful reintegration of every enrolled veteran back into his or her local community. There are currently more than 30 VTCs in Florida. To date, it is the largest in the nation in terms of docket size (more than 225 veteran defendants), the key ingredient that directly accounts for Tampa VTC's success in terms of non-returning graduates (greater than 83%), and local county tax cost savings (more than \$6.6 million per annum) lies within the ranks of its Volunteer Veteran Mentor Program.

The FVF is working to support FDVA in creating a statewide committee to serve Florida veterans with consistent standards and structure throughout the state. The statewide committee will provide “best practices” and infrastructure of proven Veteran Treatment Court operations in Florida.

**e) Homeless Veterans Stand Down Best Practices**

FVF is currently in development of best practices of Homeless and At-Risk Veteran Stand Downs. The best practices will provide the functional models throughout the state to serve struggling veterans in the most effective and efficient way, capitalizing on the most successful counties in the state. FVF is working to build county models to serve homeless and at-risk veterans to develop a program of a day of service for effective, meaningful and direct support.

**Chartered Functions of the Foundation:**

- i. Provide direct and indirect services to veterans and their families through collaborating with the appropriate federal, state and local government agencies, veteran service organizations and education entities.
- ii. Develop and facilitate best practices for programs to benefit the overall health, welfare, education, employment and housing for Florida veterans. These best practices will be in collaboration with other agency initiatives to ensure the greatest impact on veteran assistance.

- iii. Provide financial and administrative support to the Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame Council and Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame.
- iv. Support financially the publication of the annual Florida Veterans' Benefits Guide.
- v. Support the veteran benefit information services request mandate pursuant to Chapter 322.08, Florida Statutes as required by the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs and Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles.

### **Second Quarter Successes:**

FVF's direct support of FDVA is "proactive" to ensure success of military members prior to discharge. We are producing needs assessments to create roadmaps for new veterans to educate them on their journey from cradle to grave. FVF is becoming the "Systems Management" of the statewide processes to support Florida veterans.

- i. Through collaboration with the American Legion, provided emergency financial assistance to 136 Florida veterans, expending funds of \$17,812.91.
- ii. Continued working with the Five Star Veterans Center and matched Mental Health / Wellness grant, transitioning homeless veterans for reintegration into productive citizens with residence. Through FVF support, Five Star Veterans Center was able to reach 555,659.
- iii. Collaborated with Disabled American Veterans (DAV) to arrange transport for veterans to medical appointments. This Quarter FVF served 19,831.
- iv. FVF were able to contact 52,845 veterans and families through personal contact and media.
- v. In partnership with Bay Area Legal Services, they created a Veterans Legal Helpline that served 131 veterans in need of legal assistance.
- vi. Delivered services to 227 homeless veterans.
- vii. Served 21,656 veterans through Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) for education and benefits.
- viii. Supported the Northeast Florida Women Veterans' wellness program, served 125 women veterans.
- ix. Developed best practices for support organizations.

### **Subsequent Projects**

- i. FVF is working with the Florida Health Care Association (FHCA) to seek legislative appropriation of funds to serve the Florida Panhandle and to the Tampa Bay area.
- ii. FVF applied for a \$500,000 Grant to serve South Florida Aging Veterans.
- iii. The Florida Veterans Foundation has been the "go to" institution for Veteran's needs.

FVF is advocating for all veterans to utilize the Consumer Resources of the Agricultural Commission to affiliate only with non-profit organizations that are registered with the State

agency. The goal would be to advocate for all veterans to utilize only the services of “Veteran-Friendly” Organizations. Being listed with the state benefits nonprofit organizations by having access to a catalog of nonprofits for partnership, collaboration, treatment and/or referral purposes to connect to the needs of Florida veterans. Being part of the registry will confirm that the nonprofit is “in good standing” for a service and will be considered “Veteran Friendly.” We feel that this approach will guide donors to credible, beneficial programs that support veterans.

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